

A 0
S E R M O N

Preached in the
PARISH CHURCH
O F

NEWBURY, Berks;

O N

WEDNESDAY *December* 18, 1745,

Being the Day appointed for the
PUBLICK FAST.

By THOMAS PENROSE, M. A. k

Published at the Request of some of the
Principal Inhabitants.

R E A D I N G,

Printed by C. MICKLEWRIGHT and C^o,
for Jos. WIMPEY Bookseller in *Newbury*.
MDCCXLVI.



TO THE
GENTLEMEN
OF THE
CORPORATION,
AND

The Rest of the INHABITANTS
of the Parish of *Newbury*,

THIS
SERMON

Is humbly dedicated 'by their

Most obliged and

Most devoted Servant,

THOMAS PENROSE.

TO THE
GENERAL M.E.N.
OF THE
CORPORATION

AND
The Town of the HABITANTS
of the City of London
S.H.R.M.O.N.



THOMAS BARNES

2 CHRON. XX. 3, 4.

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a Fast throughout all Judah.

And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask Help of the Lord; even out of all the Cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

THE History of Mankind, from the earliest Times to this present Day, is little else than a Series of Cruelties, Invasions, Battles, and Bloodshed; *Nation rising against Nation*, and Kingdom against Kingdom, prompted by Avarice, Malice, Pride, or Ambition.

BUT 'tis almost impossible for an ingenuous Mind to read of the Changes and Revolutions of Empires; the Overthrow and Subversion of States and Kingdoms; without feeling the tenderest Concern for the Calamity of those Nations, that have been

been overwhelmed by Tyranny and Oppression; and a warm Indignation against the Tyrants and Oppressors.—And if we find our Breasts thus laudably agitated at the Story of distant Calamities, in remote Ages and Nations; what will be our Sentiments, when the Danger approaches nearer, and threatens us at our own Doors?—What will be our Sentiments, when we behold our Country bleeding under the Ravages of War; and Tyranny making daring Attempts to erect its Throne on the Ruins of expiring Liberty?—At such a melancholy Crisis, every Man should contribute, by all the Ways in his Power, to the publick Safety.—Religion, Liberty, Children, Friends, every Tie natural and social, call upon us to exert ourselves, in our Sphere and Station, for the Preservation of our Country.

WHEN *Judah* was invaded by their implacable Enemies the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, a mix'd Multitude of Idolaters, it spread an universal Terror through the whole Nation;—even *Jehoshaphat the King* was not free from the Impression; for the *Text* tells us, that *Jehoshaphat feared*: but as he was a Prince of consummate Virtue and Piety, and an experienced Captain in War, his first Fears, so natural at the sudden Approach of Danger, were soon dissipated;—he immediately prepares to secure his

his People from the Fury of the Invaders, and to repel those ambitious Disturbers of his Quiet.

AND as his Religion taught him, in the divine Songs of the Sanctuary, *that no King is saved by the Multitude of an Host; but that the Lord delivereth in the Day of Battle*; he immediately proclaims a Fast throughout all his Dominions, to be observed with the greatest Solemnity and Devotion.—The People gladly concur in this religious Observance; and, with Hearts full of Zeal for their Faith and their Country, they cheerfully come from the most distant Parts, even out of every City of Judah, to present themselves before their God in the Temple at Jerusalem.—And, in order to add to their Humiliation, to give Energy to their Devotion, and Life to their Prayers and Supplications, Jehoshaphat himself, like a true Parent of his People, stood in the Congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the House of the Lord, in the New Court:* And there, with all the holy Rapture of a Soul thoroughly possessed with the Love of God, he breaks out into the most ardent and pious Ejaculations; recounts the Mercies and Blessings that the Ancestors of his Nation had received from the Hand of God Almighty; and then fervently prays for Deliverance from

* Ver. 5.

the dismal Storm which hung over his Kingdom.

WHAT a beautiful, — what an affecting Sight must this be! — To see a great and pious Prince, at the Head of so many Thousands of his dutiful Subjects, in the Courts of God's House, praying for them and with them against the inveterate Enemies of their Religion and Liberty! — Such fervent Devotions could not fail of entring into the Ears of the Lord of Hosts; he beholds us through the blackest Cloud of Calamity; and the Tears of a Nation under Distress are the most grateful Offering that can be paid to our heavenly Father.

ACCORDINGLY, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the Son of Zechariah, a Levite of the Sons of Asaph, in the midst of the whole Congregation;** and he was commissioned to give all the People and *Jehoshaphat* the most solemn Assurances, that Heaven would certainly interpose, and destroy their Enemies, without any Bloodshed or Hazard to the People of *Judah*. — No sooner do they hear this amazing Message, but, struck with Surprise, and trembling with Joy, at the Goodness and Condescension of God, they fall prostrate before him, and *Jehoshaphat bowed his Head, with his Face to the Ground; and all Judah,*

* Ver. 14.

and

*and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. And the Levites, who executed the ministerial Office, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud Voice on high.**

SECURE of the divine Aid and Assistance; they arm themselves, and go forth, *with the Praises of God in their Mouths*, to meet the Enemy in the Field.

BUT while these were the happy Circumstances of *Jehoshaphat* and his People, the Invaders found themselves in inextricable Perplexity; they were embarrassed in their Marches, infatuated and divided in their Councils, and surrounded with Obstacles and Difficulties on every Hand. These Things, by the over-ruling Providence of God, created Dissensions and Divisions in the Army, which at length broke out into violent Hatred and Malice, and ended in Bloodshed; *for every one helped to destroy another.*† — So that *when Judah came toward the Watch-Tower in the Wilderness, they looked unto the Multitude, and behold, they were dead Bodies, fallen to the Earth, and none escaped.*‡

BEHOLD, my Brethren, the Goodness and the Power of God Almighty! — Let us read these Scriptures with Reverence and Attention: Let us meditate on these Pas-

* Ver. 19.

† Ver. 23.

‡ Ver. 24.

sages of sacred History; and keep constantly in our View the illustrious Examples of Piety, and Virtue, and Fortitude, here exhibited before us. — And, if ever we hope to experience the same Kindness, and Goodness, and Mercy from Heaven, we must be careful to qualify ourselves for it by the Practice of the same Virtues and religious Ordinances.

SUFFER me, then, on this solemn Day, *First*, to represent to you the Benefit and Advantage of religious Abstinence and unfeigned Devotion, in Times of publick Danger.

AND, *Secondly*, to exhort you to a manly Defence of your Religion and Country.

I. *First*, then, I am to represent to you the Benefit and Advantage of religious Abstinence and unfeigned Devotion, in Times of publick Danger.

“ WE are not to imagine (says a pious
 “ *Prelate*) that Fasting, as it is a mere
 “ Abstinence from Meat, can be of any
 “ Account in the Sight of God, or procure
 “ for us the Favour of Heaven: that which
 “ gives Virtue and Efficacy to Fasting is
 “ the inward Humiliation and Contrition of
 “ our Souls before God, for our own Sins,
 “ and the Sins of the Nation.” — The best
Sacrifice is a broken Spirit; a broken and contrite

trite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise! — We cannot think so meanly of the God of Heaven, as to suppose that he can be propitiated by a *Pharisaical* Demureness, a dejected *disfigured Countenance*, or by painful Macerations of the Body, and external Observances. — These may be the Masks of Hypocrisy, and have no real intrinsick Worth or Value : *God requires Truth in the inward Parts* : And that our Sorrow for our Sins should not be so much painted in our Countenances, as deeply rooted in our Hearts.

BUT when a real Grief and Remorse for our past Offences has taken Possession of our Souls, it is very proper, and often very necessary, to strengthen our penitential Contrition by Abstinence and Fasting.

THIS, then, is the true Fasting ; when we place no Dependance upon the outward Ordinance, merely as such ; but observe it as the most decent and significant Expression of the hidden Sorrow of the Heart. — And when we discharge this Duty with Uprightness, and under the Consideration that we are in the Presence of an all-seeing Judge, our holy Religion gives us Assurance, that God will be prevailed upon by our Prayers. — And if this is the Way to soften and appease the Anger and Indignation of Heaven ; surely, there is no Man among us but will *turn unto the Lord his God with Fasting and Tears.*

IN order to confirm this Doctrine beyond all Controversy; Let us consult the Book of God, and we shall find, in the Histories there recorded, “ That publick
 “ Fasting and Prayer, when carefully and
 “ conscientiously performed, was of the
 “ greatest Efficacy in averting publick Calamities, and procuring publick Blessings.”

THE Fate of *Nineveh*, * the Metropolis of a mighty Empire, and itself a City incredibly populous, was drawing to a Period: inasmuch, that, after the Expiration of forty Days, that prodigious City with all its Inhabitants was to perish in utter Ruin. — But when the Prophet *Jonah* acquainted them with the impending Danger; that the Sword of the Almighty hung over their Heads, to take speedy Vengeance for their heinous Impieties; they are alarmed at the dismal News, and carry the Prophet’s melancholy Tidings to the Throne of their Prince. — Convinced of his own Sins, and the Wickedness of his People, he trembles at the terrible Denunciations of God’s Wrath: his Heart is open to the Force of Truth, and filled with an horrible Dread at the Nearness of his Danger. — But in order to atone for his past Iniquities, and the Wickedness of his Subjects, he believed in the true God, and proclaimed a

* *Jonah* iii.—

Fast; — that all his People might humble themselves before Heaven, and be deliver'd from the Ruin denounced against them.

———— Never was a Fast more solemnly observed. — The haughty Monarch of *Affyria* was now seen in Sackcloth and Ashes, Marks of Grief and Dejection, with a Heart as humble as his Dress: And all the Nobles of his Court, that so lately flattered, and even adored him, are now the Companions and the Sharers of his Sorrow. — All the City appears in the deepest Distress and Anguish, and every Eye runs down with Tears. The very Beasts were covered with Sackcloth, and included in the universal Mourning. — But as Repentance is never sincere, without a Change of Heart; it was particularly enjoined by the *Emperor's* Decree, *that every one should turn from his evil Ways, and from the Violence that is in their Hands.* — Without this every thing else had been ineffectual; this therefore, as it was absolutely necessary, was accordingly most punctually observed. — Great, indeed, was their inward Sorrow and Compunction of Heart; and very great and successful were the Effects of it: — For when *God Almighty* beheld their Works, that they turned from the Evil of their Ways, he repented of the Evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not.

THE

THE whole Nation of the *Jews* was once in Danger of being utterly extirpated, by the cruel Orders that *Abasuerus the King* had sent forth at the Instigation of *Haman* his ambitious Favourite. * — The bloody Decree was sent with the utmost Speed into all the Provinces of the Empire: And the *Jews*, without Distinction of Age or Sex, were all doom'd to perish in one Day, the unhappy Victims of *Haman's* unrelenting Hatred. — As soon as they are acquainted with this barbarous Edict, they are almost overwhelmed with Grief: — *there was* (says the sacred Text) *great Mourning among them, and Fasting, and Weeping, and Wailing.* — Such Sorrow and unfeigned Humiliations are seldom fruitless. God Almighty beheld and commiserated the Fate of his hapless People; he had Regard to the Tears and the Fasting of these miserable Captives devoted to Death: And, by a Providential Interposition in their Favour, *Queen Esther* was raised up to deliver them from Destruction; and the merciless *Haman* dies on the same *Gallows*, which, in the Bitterness of his Rage, he had erected for *Mordecai the Jew*, to make his Death infamously conspicuous. —

THE Story of good King *Hezekiah*, when he was invaded by the numerous Armies of *Sennacherib*,† is very moving and affecting.

* *Esther* iii. 13. —

† *2 Kings* xviii. — xix. —

But

But when his Ruin seemed inevitable, and all human Helps were despaired of; he prostrates himself in Sackcloth and Ashes before the Mercy-Seat, laments his own Sins, and the Sins of his People, and most earnestly deprecates the Judgments of God.

—These Prayers, and the Prayers of *Isaiah* the Prophet, reach the Throne of Grace, and enter into the Ears of the Lord of Hosts. —Immediately the destroying Angel is sent forth into the Camp of the Assyrians, and a hundred and fourscore and five thousand of them perish in one Night: —*Jerusalem* is deliver'd from the Fury of the Sword;—And the proud *Sennacherib* is murdered by his own Sons in the Temple of his Idol. —

THESE, and many other Passages of Scripture, do sufficiently prove to us the great Benefit and Advantage of publick Fasting and Prayer, in Times of publick Judgments and Calamities.

AND, if we enquire into the Reasonableness of this Practice, we shall immediately discover it to be strictly conformable to God's Government of the World. —

The Scheme of Providence, with regard to Man, is plainly this. We have the Revelation of the Mind and Will of God:

—*Life and Death are set before us*: — Virtue and its Rewards, Vice and its Punishments, lie constantly in our View. We have

have Liberty to chuse; and our Happiness or Misery depends on the Choice we make.

— If Men are corrupt in their Morals; debauched in Principles, and wicked in Practice; then, according to the fixed Laws of Providence, they will be abandoned by Heaven, *and cast out of the Sight of God's Eyes*; and be driven about by unruly conflicting Passions; *for there is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.* — But if they become sensible of their Wickedness, and repent of it, and turn from it; in this Case they will come within the Terms of Mercy, and be again under the Patronage and Guardianship of Heaven.

• HERE is nothing inconsistent; — there is no Change in God Almighty; his Laws continue the same; — his Love of Virtue and Hatred of Sin are unchangeable. — *When the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right*; he is then restored to the Mercy of God, and recovers the Favour he had forfeited: So that the Change is not in God, but in the Man who forsakes his Sins. — This is a plain, rational, and intelligible Account of the Matter; and a full Answer to those who object, that Repentance and Fasting must be useless, or God must be accused of *Variableness and Changing*.

• IT is very apparent, then, that Humiliation and godly Sorrow are Sacrifices well-pleasing

pleasing to God, in all Seasons of Danger and Distress. — Devout *Prayers* will be very instrumental in procuring the *Peace* of our *Jerusalem*.

WHEN God Almighty from his holy Heaven, the Throne of ineffable Brightness, shall look down on us, and behold the Nation of *England* this Day assembled in his Courts, and prostrate before him; *bewailing our manifold Sins and Wickednesses, which we have most grievously committed against his Divine Majesty*: — When he observes, that we have *rent our Hearts; and not our Garments*; and are determined to *turn unto the Lord our God with all our Hearts*: — He will graciously regard our Prayers, and again cause the *Light of his Countenance to shine upon us*.

LET us, then, be sincere in our Addresses to our heavenly Father; for the Success of our Petitions depends upon the Sincerity of our Hearts. — *Let us resolve to cast away our Transgressions, and to make us clean Hearts, and a new Spirit; and then our Iniquity will not prove our Ruin*.

AND if ever there was Reason for this Exhortation in this Kingdom, surely it is at this Day. — But let the Sins of the Nation be at this Time veiled over; we are here in the Presence of God this Day to pray against them, and to resolve to amend our Lives: — Our Duty, at this solemn Season,

son, is not to accuse and inveigh against our Brethren; but to humble ourselves before the Majesty of God, to implore Forgiveness of what is past, and Protection for the Time to come. — And, I hope, it appears, from what hath been advanced, that this Humiliation and Fasting is the surest Way to recommend us to the Favour and Assistance of God.

II. PRESUMING, therefore, that you are convinced of this; I proceed to point out some other Duties incumbent on us in these Times of Danger.

WHENEVER the Tranquillity of a Nation is disturbed by the Sword of a foreign Enemy, or by false and unfaithful Brethren; then is the Season for publick Love to operate in every Breast: — then is the Season for every Man to act with an unshaken Zeal in guarding the Fences of Liberty, and repelling the Danger: — then is the Season for *heroick* Actions; and to strive, by a noble Emulation, who shall do most for the Common Good.

SURPRIZING are the Exploits which we read of in the Accounts of the old *Grecian Republicks*, and in the History of ancient *Rome*: — The Love of their Country animated them with incredible Valour, and led them on to Victory, fearless of Danger or Death. —

AND,

AND, if *Greece* and *Rome* could produce such illustrious Examples of Patriotism; O, may it never be said, that We of this Nation, who have a better Constitution of Government, and an infinitely better Religion, should be backward in defending them! — What Reproaches, what Infamy will our Posterity justly load us with, if we do not transmit to them the same Liberty, the same valuable Privileges and Blessings, which were conveyed to us by our Ancestors! — And if we are not degenerated, if we have not lost that intrepid Spirit so peculiar to our Nation, — if we still dare be free; — this is the very Season, — the very Crisis, — for standing up in Defence of our Freedom. — The Enemy of our Liberty and our Faith is armed for our Ruin; and industrious in preparing Fetters for our Minds, as well as for our Bodies. — But let that Man be covered with everlasting Guilt and Confusion, that can hesitate one Moment which to prefer, a Life of Freedom under our present mild and gentle Government, and a pure Religion; or a Life of abject Slavery under an imperious arbitrary Monarch, and an idolatrous System of Faith. —

LAMENTABLE, indeed, would be the Condition of these Kingdoms, if they were governed by a Prince of the *Romish* Communion. — But miserable beyond Expression would our Circumstances be, if the Way to

the Throne was opened by the Arms of *France*, a Nation whom we often chastised, and taught to tremble : — We must then expect nothing else but to become a tributary Province, the Slaves of faithless Slaves. — Avert it Heaven ! — And thou, O God, strengthen our Arm in this Day of Danger ! — *Make fast the Bars of our Gates ; and defend the Borders of our Sion !*

We should most seriously reflect, Brethren, on the Nature of that Religion, which our Enemies profess, and which they would certainly labour to establish in these Kingdoms : What Cruelties it authorizes to be exercised on us of the *Protestant* Communion. — We should reflect on the shocking Severities, the terrible Tortures, the painful Deaths inflicted on many of our Nation in past Ages by the sanguinary Sons of *Rome*. — More than eight hundred *Protestants* perished in the Flames, and on the Gibbets, under *Queen Mary* ; though her Reign was but very little more than five Years. — And in the Reign of *King Charles I*, when that unhappy Prince was involved in Disputes with his *British* Subjects, the *Papists* in *Ireland*, with an unparalleled Cruelty, plundered and massacred above forty thousand *Protestants* in less than one Year ; sporting inhumanly at their dying Agonies, and barbarously insulting the dead Bodies. — And, to compleat their
bloody

bloody Triumph, they made such dreadful Havock, that, in the Space of three Years, more than three hundred Thousand *English* and *Protestants* either perished by Tortures, or were driven naked from their Estates into Banishment.

THESE are Images that must fill us with Horror, and raise all our Indignation against that Church, that propagates the pure and peaceable Religion of our Lord Jesus Christ by such cruel and inhuman Methods.—By this we may be taught what we might expect from the present Invader of our Peace; who comes enraged for past Injuries, and brings his Religion from the *Pope* himself; and the *Conclave of Cardinals*.

WHATEVER Promises he may make, That he would preserve the Constitution in all its Branches; yet no Man will suffer himself to be deceived by such specious Appearances:—Since we are fully acquainted that, according to the Tenor of his Faith, he must break through all the Assurances and Engagements that he makes. For 'tis a Maxim in the *Church of Rome*, “That no Faith is to be kept with *Hereticks*.”—And, when they destroy *Protestants*, whom they stigmatize with the opprobrious Name of *Hereticks*, they call it a meritorious Action, the Cause of God, and doing God Service.

O BLESSED Jesus!—didst thou so severely rebuke thy Disciples, who were for
calling

*calling down Fire from Heaven on the unbelieving Samaritans? ** — And yet does the *Church of Rome* claim the Preference of all the Christian World, for propagating her Faith by Massacres and Flames? — Surely, it never can be agreeable to *Jesus Christ*, the everlasting *Prince of Peace*, that Men should be converted to his Doctrine by Tortures and Torments, inflicted by Persons void of all Sense of Tenderness and Humanity, though dignified by the Name of *holy Inquisitors*.

No! my Brethren, however necessary these Cruelties may be to compel Men, better instructed, to embrace the Corruptions of the *Church of Rome*; yet they are utterly repugnant to the Design and Tendency of the Word of God. — And, therefore, we hope, that from this Conviction, and the Experience of past Ages, we shall all continue to unite and exert ourselves, in our several Places, to oppose the Danger, and preserve our excellent Constitution. — And, if we may judge of Consequences from that laudable Spirit of publick Love and Loyalty, that so universally prevails among us; we shall, by the Blessing of God upon our Endeavours, be able to bear down all Opposition, and to settle ourselves on a firmer Basis for the Time to come.

* Luke ix. 54, 55.

WHEREFORE, Let every Man charge it upon his Conscience, to do his utmost, in that Sphere where his Interest lies, for the publick Benefit. — For as there is no Man, even in the lowest Station of Life, but may, in some Measure, hurt the Society, by abandoning or opposing its Interest; — So, when our Hearts and Hands are united in the same laudable Pursuit of securing the publick Tranquillity, we shall have but little Reason to dread the Attempts of our Enemies.

LET us, then, for our own Sakes, as well as for the Sake of God and his holy Religion, conspire to preserve those Laws and that Liberty, wherein our Happiness, above all other Nations, consists. — And, unless we do this, there is no other Alternative, we must become Slaves ourselves, and enslave the Generations yet unborn.

LET us defend the Illustrious PRINCE now on the Throne of these Realms. — We have given him Assurances of our Fidelity by an Oath, by calling upon God Almighty to witness for the Truth of our Promises. And may Heaven prosper us in the Execution of them! That so He may long reign over us, blessing, and being blessed by, a grateful People: — That the Crown may descend in a quiet uninterrupted Succession to his remotest Posterity; — That the Nation may be blest with Peace and Security,

city, and for ever worship God in the Beauty of Holiness!
 And thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, who hast seen our Contrition this Day, and our Resolutions of Amendment for the Time to come, Do thou assist us from thy holy Heaven! — Guard us under the Shadow of thy Wings! And, as we are desirous of becoming thy People, vouchsafe, O Lord, to be our God. —

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